

Random Encounters

"Shopping, darling ..." - Fresh Air

By Eric Haddock



Buying magic items in a large city is something every player character wants to do at one point or another. It's exciting when, after the party's first big take, the PCs can walk tall into town and demand the most expensive and exotic items.

Not all campaign settings have stores with magic items for sale, but if yours does, then these random encounters might add a little spice to an otherwise mundane experience.

The Fumery

Stores that sell purely exotic wares are often destinations for PCs wanting to buy wondrous items. One such place is the Fumery. It's not a store with four walls but it *is* a large tent in an open air market that specializes in candles, incense, and the like. It's a favorite among candle casters and anyone needing strong, meditative candles and incense. It's a relatively permanent structure in the market and has earned a permanent name and reputation for having a wide selection.

Unknown to the operators of the Fumery, a belker has crept into their store using wafts of incense smoke to conceal it. It waits patiently to strike an unsuspecting person -- which will of course be one of the PCs.



Belker: CR 6; Large elemental (air); HD 7d8+7; hp 42; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, 2 wings) and +5 melee (1d4+1, bite) and +5 melee (1d3+1, 2 claws); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA smoke claws; SQ elemental traits, smoke form; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 21, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +1, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Spot +9; Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (wing).

Smoke Claws (Ex): A belker in smoke form can engulf opponents by moving on top of them. It fills the air around one Medium-size or smaller opponent without provoking an attack of opportunity. The target must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 14) or inhale part of the creature. Smoke inside the victim solidifies into a claw or talon and begins to rip at the surrounding organs, dealing 3d4 points of damage per round. The affected creature can attempt another Fortitude save each subsequent round to cough out the semivaporous menace.

Elemental Traits: A belker is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking and cannot be raised or resurrected (though a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore life). A belker also has darkvision 60 ft.

Smoke Form (Su): Most of the time a belker is more or less solid, but at will it can assume a smoke form. It can switch forms once a round as a free action and can spend up to 20 rounds per day in smoke form. A belker in smoke form can fly at a speed of 50 feet (perfect maneuverability). The ability is otherwise similar to a *gaseous form* spell (caster level 7th).

Bringing the Parts Together

Clíodhna definitely has something against the PCs and in particular the one(s) who would likely buy incense for mediation. If the PCs carefully examine the candle or incense they bought (Search check DC 15) they discover that the base of the candle is marked with sigils. A successful Bardic Knowledge check or Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) reveals that traders from a neighboring kingdom use the sigil. The purpose of the mark is to track stolen merchandise and to ensure authenticity of items once they're received by the buyer.

Coming in Part 4 of "Shopping, darling ..."

What could possibly happen *outside* the mage's guild?

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About the Author

Eric Haddock is a technical writer living in Renton, Washington, with his wife, Julia Martin, and Oracle and Ororo, their two cats. Eric runs [Abashima Press](#), which is an imprint for himself and fellow authors in the Seattle gaming community. Eric is a former assistant editor of *Dragon Magazine* and a game content writer for Xbox and PC games for Microsoft. In his spare time, he wallows in his addiction to *Civilization III* and takes care to shop online and avoid any unnecessary incidents at the store. . . .

